

TEEN
TERROR



NOV. 2001
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TALES



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FROM THE

CRYPT

STORIES



THE WOLF



THE WOLF



THE WOLF



DOUBLE-SIZED HORROR!

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NO. 3



NOV

TALES FROM THE CRYPT

FEATURING



THE CRYPT-KEEPER



THE OLD WITCH



THE VAULT-KEEPER



THE CRYPT OF TERROR

WELL, HEY! SO YOU'RE BACK FOR MORE GORE, EH, FRIEND? WELL, THIS IS THE SPOT FOR IT! WELCOME TO THE CRYPT OF TERROR! THIS IS YOUR HOST IN HORROR, THE CRYPT-KEEPER, READY TO START THE BRANK ROLLING IN MY RICKING-RAG WITH ANOTHER SPINE-TINGLING TALE FROM MY CREEP-COLLECTION. TWENTY YOUR BELTS SO YOU WON'T BE SCARED OUT OF YOUR PANTS, AND I'LL BEGIN THE BLOOD-GORDELCH I CALL...

UNDERTAKING PALLOR



MR. ESPROCK'S BLACK PANEL TRUCK HAD PULLED UP BEFORE HIS MORTUARY, AND SOMEHOW HE'D GOTTEN THE KEYS BACK WITH ITS SPIRIT CONTENTS INSIDE, WHILE OUT IN THE LITTER-STREWN BACK YARD, THE BOX HAD CREPT TO THE BACK WINDOW ON TIPTOES, LIKE SO MANY GREY SHADOWS... LIKE SO MANY NOISE, THEY'D PECKED INTO THE PORCELAIN AND GLASS-LINED UNDERTAKING PALLOR WITH WIDE EYES AND CHATTERING TEETH. WHISPERING...

THAT'S OLD MAN
PROVES
HE DID
YESTER-
DAY!

MR. ESPROCK'S
WITN' READY TO
FOLLOW HIM.

I DON'T
WANT TO
LOOKY'N
SCARED!

JESSE?

THERE IS A MORBID CURIOSITY IN CHILDREN, A STRANGE FASCINATION WITH DEATH. IT HURRIES THEM TO THE SCENES OF ACCIDENTS, DUCKS THEM INTO MOVIE THEATERS TO WATCH IT UNFOLD ON SILVER SCREENS, PROMPTS THEM TO MAKE-BELIEVE ABOUT IT... AND DRAWS THEM TO WINDOWS IN UNDERTAKING PARLORS.



WHAT'S HE
DOIN'?
SHARRY?

HE'S TAKIN'
OFF THE
CLOTHES?

SH-NAH!
HE'LL HEAR
YOU!

DEATH IS THE UNKNOWN IN THE LIFE EQUATION. IT IS THE ULTIMATE FINAL RESULT OF EVERY LIVING EXAMPLE. IT IS THE UNQUESTIONABLE TO YOUNG MINDS CLASPING FOR ANSWERS.



NOW HE'S
SHARPENIN'
HIS SCALPEL?

WOLLY!
I DON'T
FEEL SO
GOOD!

SO IT WAS ONLY NATURAL FOR CHERRY AND PETE AND BILLY AND PERCIVAL TO WANT TO SEE MORE OF THIS UNTHINKABLE PROBLEM. TO WANT TO LEARN WHAT NEXT IN BEHIND MR. ESPROCK'S CLOSED MORTUARY DOORS.



IF IT MAKES
YOU SICK...
DON'T
LOOK,
PERCY?

UGH! HE'S KICKIN'
OLD MR. ESPROCK'
DOWN AT THE BASE
OF HIS NECK...

INSIDE THE MORTUARY, OLIVIOUS TO THE WIDE PYING EYES THAT FOLLOWED HIS EVERY MOVE, AVERILL ESPROCK LABORED SLOWLY, DELIBERATELY, AS IF HE ENJOYED HIS WORK.



WHAT'S THAT HE'S
DOIN', BILLY?

STICKIN' A NEEDLE WITH
A FINE INTO THE GUT HE
MADE IN MR. SPONES' NECK!

AND AS HE WORKED, AVERILL HUMMED SOFTLY, FILLING THE MORTUARY WITH HIS MUTED GREEN MUSIC.



HE'S TURNIN' ON SOME
KIND OF MOTOR?

HE'S PUMPIN'
OUT THE BLOOD,
THAT'S WHAT
HE'S DOIN'!

AWHAAA...

THE PUMP BEGAN TO GURGLE, GURGLES THE SCARLET LIQUID OUT OF THE DEAD BODY THROUGH THE PULSATING TUBE AND SENDS IT INTO THE PORCELAIN SINK.



WOLLY! WE COULD CHARGE
THE ROBOT OF THE BANG
ADMISSIONS TO WATCH
THIS!

MR. BRUDDER! YOU'RE
ALWAYS THINKIN' OF
WAYS T' MAKE MONEY!

AFTER A WHILE THE GURGLES STOPPED AND THE PUMP RAN QUIETLY.



THE BLOOD'S
ALL PUMPED
OUT?

NOW
WHAT?

HE'S TAKIN' DOWN THAT
BIG JAR OF LIQUID!

MR. ESPROCK KINKED THE HOSE THAT RAN OFF INTO THE RED-STAINED PORCELAIN SINK AND PUSHED IT INTO THE NECK OF THE JAR WITH THE COLORLESS LIQUID.



EVERILL PRESSED A SWITCH. THE PUMP REVERSED ITSELF. THE GURGling BEGAN AGAIN. THE COLORLESS LIQUID IN THE JAR BEGAN TO SLOWLY DISAPPEAR, FORCED INTO MR. GROVES' EMPTY ARTERIES.



THE LAST DROP OF THE EMBALMING FLUID GURGLED OUT OF THE JAR AS THE LAST DROP OF A SODA IS SUCKED FROM A FOUNTAIN GLASS THROUGH A PRAYED STRAW. MR. ESPROCK SHUT OFF THE MOTOR.



SOMEWHERE IN THE MORTUARY, A BELL TINKLED. MR. ESPROCK STIFFENED. A FIGURE SNEAK ASIDE THE CURTAINS AND CAME INTO THE BACK ROOM.



THE KIDS FLEERING THROUGH THEIR PEET-HOLE WHISPERED EXCITEDLY...



MOP...NOBODY SAW ME. NOW MUCH DO WE MAKE THIS TIME?



FIFTY BUCKS? FOR DRYIN' OUT LOUD, IT DON'T PAY TO TAKE SUCH CHANCES FOR THAT LITTLE DUGH.



WHAT'S YA THINK?
I GET A CHANCE TO DO
IT *EVERY* DAY IN THE
WEEK! I GOT TO
WAIT TILL SOMEBODY
GETS *STAR* FIRST...
AND *NEEDS* A
PRESCRIPTION FILLED!

I KNOW!
I KNOW!
DON'T
GET
BORE!

I'M *NOT* SURE. IN
FACT, I FEEL *PRETTY*
GOOD! THE NEXT
FUNERAL YOU GET
WILL BE THE *BIGGEST*
ONE THIS TOWN'S
EVER SEEN!

WHO'S
SICK,
MORT?

NEEDY BUT
THE *HIGHEST*
MAN IN TOWN...
AND I *DELIVERED*
HIS PRESCRIPTION
THIS MORNING!

HEH, HEH!
GOOD! GOOD!
WE OUGHT TO
KNOW BY
TOMORROW...

OUTSIDE, THE KIDS LOOK AT EACH OTHER, HORRIFIED.

THE *BIGGEST* GUY IN
TOWN?? WAS THAT
PERCY'S OLD MAN...

HEY, WHERE
IS PERCY?

HE'S NOT
HERE?

DO YOU THINK
WE HEARD?

I DON'T *THINK*
NOT *BELIEF*, WHAT'LL
WE DO?

G'WENT!

BILLY AND CHUBBY AND PETE TOOK OUT OF THE ALLEY-
WAY BEHIND MR. ESPROCK'S MORTUARY AND RAN ALL
THE WAY TO PERCY'S HOUSE. WHEN THEY GOT THERE,
THEY FOUND PERCY SITTING ON THE FRONT STEPS,
SOMBER...

PERCY!
MR. GRADY
AND MR.
ESPROCK...
HEY, WHAT'S
BROODING PERCY?

MY... BOB...
MY POP! HE
DIED A LITTLE
WHILE AGO!

BOBBY
REE!

THEY WERE TOO LATE. THEY STOOD AROUND ANXIOUSLY,
WONDERING WHAT TO SAY TO POOR GRIEVING PERCY, AND
THEN THEY LEFT HIM QUIETLY SOMBER...

IT'S BETTER THAT
PERCY DIDN'T KNOW
THAT MR. GRADY'S
THE SPONGEST,
POISONED HIS
OLD MAN...

...AND THAT HE'S
WORKING IN CANNOTS
WITH MR. ESPROCK,
THE UNDERTAKER...

DO YOU
THINK WE
OUGHT TO
TELL THE
GOPS?



AM, THEY WOULDN'T BELIEVE US ANYWAY... A COUPLE OF KIDS?

YEAH, WE GOT TO TAKE CARE OF THIS OURSELVES!

BUT, HOW?



THE NEXT DAY, PETE AND BILLY AND CHUCKY WERE AT THEIR PEEP-HOLE, WATCHING MR. ESBOOK ENBAHM PERCY'S FATHER...

HERE COMES MR. ESBOOK!

SH-H-H-H... LISTEN...



HEY, HEY! WELL, AVERILL, DID YOU STICK 'EM GOOD?

THREE BRAND NEW! WE CLEAR ONE THOUSAND. THAT'S FINE HUNDRED APRIL!



THAT'S MORE LIKE IT, ER... WHAT'S WRONG, AVERILL, IF YOU DON'T LOOK GOOD?

WET? I FEEL ALL RIGHT, MORT? WHY?



I DON'T KNOW! YOU LOOK PALE... NOW DOWN YOU LOOK LIKE YOU NEED A TONGUE! I'LL GIVE ONE OVER...

DON'T BOTHER, IT'S THE EXPOSURE, I TELL YOU!



OUTSIDE, PETE GRINNED...

I JUST GOT AN IDEA, FELLERS!

TELL US LATER, PETE. LISTEN...



THE FEDERAL'S TOMORROW MORNING, MORT. I'LL PROBABLY GET PAID TOMORROW NIGHT! MEET ME AT THE USUAL PLACE, AND I'LL GIVE YOU YOUR SHARE.

FINE. SAY AROUND MIDNIGHT...



HE'S SORRY! WHAT'S YOUR IDEA, PETE?

CHERRY, YOU GET DOWN TO BRADY'S BARK STORE AND YOU HANG AROUND IN FRONT... STAY THERE ALL DAY! IF YOU HAVE TO!



WHEN HE GIVES YOU A PACKAGE TO DELIVER TO MR. ESBOOK, DON'T BRING IT TO HIM, BRING IT TO OUR GLOTHOUSE, UNDERSTAND?

RIGHT?

AFTER CHUBBY LEFT, PETE TOLD HIS PLAN TO BILLY. THEN THEY WERE ANGRY TO THE FRONT OF MR. ESPROCK'S MORTUARY AND WAITED. THEY WAITED UNTIL MR. ESPROCK CAME OUT.



YOU LOOK PALE, MR. ESPROCK. YOU LOOK SICK!

YOU DON'T KNOW! EXCUSE DOWN WITH SOMETHING! MR. ESPROCK!



MR. ESPROCK WENT BACK INTO THE MORTUARY THE KIDS DARTED AROUND TO THE BACK WINDOW IN TIME TO HEAR:



OUTSIDE MR. BRUGHT'S STORE, CHUBBY WAITED PATIENTLY. FINALLY, MR. BRUGHT CAME OUT.



HOW'D YOU LIKE TO MAKE A ANGEL, CHUBBY? DELIVER THIS PACKAGE OVER TO MR. ESPROCK AT THE UNDER-DEATH PARLOR.



CHUBBY TOOK THE PACKAGE AND RUSHED STRAIGHT TO THE CLUB HOUSE WITH IT. PETE AND BILLY WERE WAITING.



MR. ESPROCK OPENED THE DOOR TO HIS MORTUARY TO SEE CHUBBY STANDING BEFORE HIM, HOLDING A STRAY CAT IN ONE HAND AND THE BOTTLE OF 'TONIC' IN THE OTHER.



MR. BRUGHT ASKED ME TO DELIVER THIS, MR. ESPROCK!

OH, THANK YOU, CHUBBY!

CHUBBY HELD OUT THE BOTTLE OF 'TONIC', LETTING IT SLIP FROM HIS FINGERS.



HERE TARE, DOOOPS!

LOOK OUT, FOU...LUNSY...

THE BOTTLE SMASHED INTO A THOUSAND GLITTERING FRAGMENTS AND THE 'TONIC' POOLED OUT OVER THE MORTUARY FLOOR. CHUBBY RELEASED THE STRAY CAT.



GOLLY! I'M SORRY, MR. ESPROCK. L.L. HERE, KITTY!

GET THAT CAT OUT OF HERE!

THE CAT WAS BUSILY LAPPING UP THE SPILLED TONIC. CHUBBY HESITATED...

I SAID GET THAT CAT OUT OF HERE!

LOOK, MR. ESPROCK!



THE CAT NERVOUSLY FILLED WITH THE RAP-POISON, IT BOVEALED AND ROLLED OVER...

WHAT HAPPENED TO IT?

GOOD LORD... IT'S DEAD!



MR. ESPROCK STUCK HIS FINGER INTO THE POOL OF 'TONIC' AND SWIPPED IT...

WHY THAT DIRTY DOUBLE-CROOK!!! THIS IS POISON!

WELL, I GOT TO GO, MR. ESPROCK!



THE NEXT DAY PETE'S FATHER'S FUNERAL WAS HELD IN A STEADY DOWNPOUR. THE BOYS WATCHED FROM AFAR...

THINK ESPROCK FELL FOR IT?

WE'LL SEE TOMORROW WHEN HE MEETS GRUBBY!



LATE THAT NIGHT THE KIDS WAITED FOR MR. ESPROCK TO EMERGE FROM HIS MORTUARY. TOWARD MIDNIGHT, HE CAME OUT. THEY FOLLOWED HIM AT A SAFE DISTANCE AS HE MADE HIS WAY SILENTLY OUT OF TOWN...

HE'S HEADED FOR THE CEMETERY!

P-P-POLLY?

C'mon!



PETE AND BILLY AND CHUBBY FOLLOWED MR. ESPROCK INTO THE CEMETERY. MR. GRUBBY WAS WAITING...

THAT POLY ANDRELL?

SURPRISED GRUBBY? YOU THOUGHT I'D BE DEAD BY NOW, DIDN'T YOU?



WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT, ANDRELL?

I'M TALKING ABOUT THAT POISONED TONIC YOU SENT ME, MORT. ESPOCK, THE BO DROPPED IT!



THE KNIFE IN MR. ESPROCK'S HAND GLINTED IN THE MOONLIGHT...

ARE YOU TRYING TO KILL ME, BRUDY? WELL NOW... I'M GONNA KILL YOU!

ARE YOU TRYING TO KILL ME, BRUDY? WELL NOW... I'M GONNA KILL YOU!



MR. ESPROCK DROPPED THE KNIFE DOWN INTO MR. BRUDY'S CHEST. MR. BRUDY'S SCREAM ECHOED THROUGH THE DESERT CEMETERY.

YAAAAAAA



SUDDENLY THE KNIFE WAS VERY STILL, SAVE FOR AVERILL ESPROCK'S HEAVY BREATHING AS HE STOOD OVER MORE GRUDY'S PROFOUNDLY SPRAWLED BODY... AND THEN...

AAAAAGGGGG!

WHO'S GONNA THERE?



MR. ESPROCK SPUN AROUND, THE KNIFE GRIPPED TIGHTLY IN HIS HAND.

WHO'S THERE?

G'WON! LET'S RUN FOR IT!



THE BOYS BEGAN TO RUN. MR. ESPROCK SCREAMED AFTER THEM.

COME BACK! G'WON! HERE, YON...

I... I CAN'T... I CAN'T... RUN... RUN... FASTER.



THEY RAN WILDLY OVER THE GRAVE-MOUNDS... THE THREE TERRIFIED BOYS WITH MISPLACED MR. ESPROCK CLOSE BEHIND THEM, BRANDISHING THE BLOODY KNIFE...

YON, CHUBBY! RUN!

I CAN'T! I'LL KILL YOU! I SWEAR! IF I'LL...



SUDDENLY, MR. ESPROCK PLUNGED FORWARD, SPLATTERING HIS HEAD UPON THE SHARP CORNER OF A NEWLY CUT TOMBSTONE...



AND WHEN THE BOYS CAUTIOUSLY RETURNED TO WHERE HE LAY...

HE'S DEAD?

LOOK! LOOK AT THE BLOOD ON THE HEADSTONE!

IT'S FRESH! IT'S FRESH! IT'S FRESH!



HEY, HEY! THERE'S A STIRRING WIND-UP TO A TERROR-TALE, EH, GEEPS? NOW, THE HARRY-KEEPER SMITH WITH HIS TALE OF COFFINS AND CADAVERS, SO I'LL TURN YOU OVER TO HIM. I'LL DO YOU LATER, TALKING 'BOAT BIGGERS, AS THE FRENCH BEE-BOPPER SAID WHEN HE SAW THE GUILLOTINE... 'MAN, DID THAT CRAZY BARBER CHAIN!'



THE VAULT OF HORROR!

HEH, HEH... AND NOW, FOLLOWS, IF YOU WILL VENTURE INTO THE VAULT OF HORROR, YOUR HOST, THE VAULT-KEEPER WILL ENTERTAIN YOU. FOR THIS,

MY OFFERING IN C.F.T.M.A.S., I HAVE CHOSEN A GRAVE TALE. HEH? IT'S TOLD BY A GRAVE! SO, CUDDLE UP TO THAT CORPSE OVER THERE AND I'LL BEGIN THE DRAMA OF DREAD AND DEATH CALLED...

THE CRAVING GRAVE!



THE WIND BLOWS LADLY AROUND THE MARBLED AND BENT TREES AROUND ME. IT WHISPERS PAST THE GOLD STONE MONUMENTS THAT THE OTHERS PROUDLY HOLD UPWARD TOWARD THE NIGHT SKY. BUT UPON MY BREAST THERE IS NO GOLD STONE FOR THE WIND TO CURE OVER. I LIE SILENT WITH AN EARTHNESS WITHIN ME... A YEARNING. THE OTHERS SIGH CONTENTEDLY, SHIFTING AND CRACKING, EMBRACING THEIR CHARGES... THEIR RICH CHILDREN. BUT I AM BARREN... FRUITLESS. BENEATH MY MOUNDED OXEN SKIN-CRUST, NO RICH CHARGE LIES, NEITHER. I AM LOVELY. I AM GRAYFORD...



I AM AN UNOCCUPIED GRAVE, SMILING WITH THE DYING WIND... WAITING FOR MY LINEAGES TO END...
WAITING FOR A BODY!

I HAVE WAITED LIKE THIS THROUGH THE CENTURIES, WATCHING THE OTHERS AROUND ME, EACH IN THEIR TURN, OPEN WIDE THEIR YEARNING MOUTHS AND TAKE IN THEIR WARDS, CRODING THEM HAPPILY WITHIN THEIR EARTH-WOMBS...



LOWER THE COFFIN...

SOR...SOR...

I HAVE LAID FALLOW THROUGH THE FREEZES AND THE THAWS, HEALING THEM NURSING THEIR FOSTER-CHILDREN, AND LONGING FOR MY OWN. ON SUNDAYS, I HAVE LISTENED TO THE MOORWARRS AND REMEMBERS COME AND CRY UPON THE OTHERS AND PLACE FLOWERS UPON THEIR ROOSTS...



SOR...SOR...

HE WAS A GOOD MAN...

ON NIGHTS LIKE THIS ONE... WHEN THE SKY IS OVERCAST WITH LOW HANGING RAIN-CLOUDS, WHEN I CAN SEE NO STARS... I CAN ONLY LIE AND LISTEN TO THE HAPPY CHATTERING OF THE BRAVES AROUND ME GUARDING, PROTECTING, CARING FOR THEIR BROOD. I CAN ONLY LIE AND LISTEN AND YEARN. I TEAR FOR THE DAY WHEN I, TOO, WILL REACH FORTH AND DRAW IN MY DEATH-FETTER AND HOLD IT FAST, SUGGING IT WITH MY CAMPRESS...



HERE IT IS, WILLIE.

LET'S GET IT, AL. NOT MUCH TIME LEFT TILL MORNIN'!

AND ALWAYS WHEN THE WIND COMES UP ACROSS THE OTHER WAVES, IT CARRIES THEIR LAUGHTER TO ME. THEY LAUGH BECAUSE THEY HAVE FULFILLED THEIR PURPOSE. THEY LAUGH BECAUSE THEY ARE NO LONGER EMPTY AND BARRER AND CHILDLESS. THEY LAUGH AT ME.



WHY HARD AS A ROCK?

HERE, USE THE PICK...

BUT, WAIT! WHAT IS THAT I HEAR? VOICES IN THE WIND... VOICES IN THE NIGHT... VOICES OVER ME? AND WHAT IS THAT I FEEL? GOLD STEEL BENTING MY CRUST... CRACKING OPEN MY EARTH-SKIN...



WHAT? WHY DON'T PEOPLE DIE IN THE SUMMERTIME... WHEN THE GROUND IS SOFT?

I'LL TELL MY CONGRESS-MAN THEY'LL PASS A LAW!

THERE IS A TREMBLING DOWN DEEP WITHIN ME... A SURGE OF EXCITEMENT AND ANTICIPATION. THE WIND DIES... AND THE LAUGHTER DIES...



NOW OLD AND DIED

SIXTY-THREE...

ALL THESE YEARS OF WAITING. ALL THESE YEARS OF LONGING AND TEARING AND DYING. THEY'RE ALMOST OVER. THOSE MEN UPON MY GUEST... THEY'RE BRAVE OLD MEN...



AND NOW IT IS MORNING. I LIE WITH MY INSIDES TORN FROM ME AND HEAVED UP AT MY SIDE. I LIE OPEN, FEELING THE SUNLIGHT. THE COLD AIR. I HEAR THE GRUNTING STEPS THAT I HAVE HEARD SO OFTEN... HEAR THE GRIENTS OF THE PALLBEARERS THAT HAVE NEVER UNTIL THIS DAY DELIVERED INTO ME. AND I SMILE...



THE COFFIN IS LOWERED. I REACH UPWARD FOR IT, ACCEPTING IT, FEELING OF ITS SMOOTHNESS, AND SENSING OF ITS CONTENTS... MY DEATH-WARD. MY CORPSE-CHARGE... IN DOWN.



"SOME, ROLAND? IT IS DONE."

"YES... YES... YES, SIR!"

THE GRAVE DIGGERS TRUDGE OFF, I AM FULFILLED. THE EMPHATICNESS WITHIN ME IS DONE...THE TEARINGS VANISHED. THE BODY LIES UNARMED INSIDE ME. I WHISPER TO IT... SOOTHING IT...COMFORTING IT IN ITS FINAL REST.

THE DAYS AND WEEKS PASS, BUT THE BODY WITHIN MY FOLD DOES NOT LIE AT REST. THE BODY WITHIN ME IS NOT AT PEACE. THERE IS A STIRRING INSIDE THE COFFIN WERTLING IN MY BOWEN. A FLUTTERING... A SCRATCHING...



I LISTEN WITH A DRUNKEN JOY TO THE CEREMONY, FEELING THE MOURNERS' FEET UPON MY BREAST. THERE ARE NOT MANY MOURNERS... A NEPHEW, HIS WIFE, AND A LAWYER-FRIEND. BUT I DO NOT CARE. IT IS NOT THE MOURNERS WHO I AM INTERESTED IN. IT IS THE ONE FOR WHOM THEY GRIEVE.



"ASKED TO ASKED. DON'T TO BURST..."

THE MOURNERS LEAVE. THE GRAVE DIGGERS STEP FORWARD WITH THEIR SHOVELS. I EMBRACE THE COFFIN MORE AND MORE AS THEY RETURN. MY SOIL-INGRESS TO ME. THEY STAND, FINALLY, UPON MY REPAIRED BODY, TAMING DOWN MY OUTER SOUL, STITCHING UP THE SOUND.



"ALL RIGHT, AMBITIOUS. THAT'S ENOUGH. COME ON."

"TAKE IT EASY, WILLY."

THE BODY TELLS ME HER STORY. HER NAME IS CYNTHIA WENDOWS. SHE WAS, LIKE ME, LONELY ALL HER LIFE. SHE'D REMAINED UNMARRIED...BARRER, FRUITLESS... YEARNING FOR THE THINGS HER MARRIED SISTER ENJOYED.



"IT'S A LONELY BABY BOY, MYRA. WHAT IS HIS NAME?"

"I'M GOING TO CALL HIM ROLAND."

THE BODY STIRRING WITHIN ME TELLS ME OF THE LONELY YEARS... THE LONGING SHE'D FELT FOR A CHILD OF HER OWN... AND I UNDERSTAND, HADN'T I FELT THE SAME AS SHE?



AND THE EMPTY YEARS HAD CRAWLED BY... AS THEY CRAWLED FOR ME. SHE MADE WISE INVESTMENTS OF THE INHERITANCE SHE'D SHARED WITH HER SISTER, AND SHE'D GROWN WEALTHY. WHILE HER SISTER...



MYRA'S FALLEN ILL SUDDENLY. SHE'S DEAD WITHIN THE WEEK...



AND SO, THE LONELY YEARS HAD ENDED FOR CYNTHIA AS MY LONELY YEARS HAD ENDED. SHE'D TAKEN ROLAND TO HER ROOM AS IT'D TAKEN HER...



SHE'D FELT THE LAUGHTER...THE SCORN AROUND HER AS IT'D FELT SCORN. SHE'D WATCHED THE OTHER WOMEN SHE'D SEEN MARRY AND HAVE CHILDREN. AND SHE'D GRIED. AS IT'D GRIED...



AND SHE'D WAITED THROUGH THE YEARS... AS IT'D WAITED. FINALLY...



ROLAND'S ARRIVAL IN CYNTHIA'S HOUSE HAD MEANT THE END OF THE LAUGHTER AROUND HER...THE END OF SCORN...JUST AS HER ARRIVAL HAD MEANT THE END OF SCORN FOR ME.



CYNTHIA, TOO, HAD BEEN FULFILLED. SHE'D REWARDED ROLAND...COMFORTED HIM, AND HE'D GROWN INTO MANHOOD... BUT THERE WAS A STINGING WITHIN HIM...JUST AS NOW,CYNTHIA STIRS...

I'M GOING AWAY, AUNT CYNTHIA. I CAN'T STAY HERE ANY LONGER.

ROLAND? DON'T LEAVE ME! PLEASE.



THE SCORCHING, CLAWING BODY WITHIN ME TELLS HOW ROLAND HAD LEFT HER...DESPITE HER PLEASING... LEFT HER TO THE LAUGHTER AND THE SCORN AMONG HER ORDS MORE...

SOB... SOB...



AND THEN SHE'S DISCOVERED ~~HOW~~ ROLAND HAD LEFT SO SUDDENLY.

POOR CYNTHIA. HOW SORRY I FEEL FOR HER...TO YEARN FOR ~~SURELY HER~~...TO YEARN FOR IT FOR SO LONG...TO FINALLY GET IT, AND THEN TO LOSE IT ONCE MORE. SHE TELLS ME OF HOW BROKEN-HEARTED THE WAR...

SHE TELLS ME HOW SHE'S TRIED TO FORGET HIM... SHE TELLS ME HOW ~~HOW SHE TRIED TO FORGET HIM~~... TO MAKE HER WEALTHIER AND WEALTHIER. AND THEN...SIX YEARS LATER...

THE MONEY? I HAD THREE HUNDRED DOLLARS IN THIS DRAWER. IT'S GONE!



ROLAND. SOB... ROLAND.



YES, WHO IS IT? WHO...~~ROLAND~~? YOU'VE COME BACK!

YES, AUNT CYNTHIA, AND I'VE BROUGHT SOMEONE...



CYNTHIA'D BEEN SO GLAD TO SEE ROLAND SHE'D COMPLETELY FORGOTTEN THE CRIME HE'D COMMITTED WHEN HE'D LEFT...

THEY'D COME TO LIVE WITH HER. ROLAND'D BEGGED CYNTHIA'S FORGIVENESS...

THIS IS MY WIFE ERIC, AUNT CYNTHIA. ERIC, THIS IS MY AUNT CYNTHIA.

ROLAND'S TOLD ME SO MUCH ABOUT YOU, AUNT CYNTHIA!



I WAS FOUL AND FOOLISH, AUNT CYNTHIA. IT WAS WRONG OF ME TO TAKE THE MONEY! I'M SORRY!

THERE, THERE, ROLAND. IT HAPPENED A LONG TIME AGO!



SO ONCE MORE THE LAUGHTER AND SCORN AROUND CYNTHIA'S DEAD AUNT. ROLAND HAD COME BACK. AND HE'D BROUGHT HIS WIFE. CYNTHIA HAD TWO CHILDREN NOW...



YOU DON'T KNOW HOW HAPPY YOU'VE MADE AN OLD LONELY WOMAN, ENDS... ROLAND?

WE BOTH LOVE YOU, AUNT CYNTHIA!

YES, AUNT CYNTHIA...

BUT THEN CYNTHIA TELLS ME WHAT ROLAND AND ENID HAD PLANNED...



ONCE WE SET HER TO MAKE OUT A WILL LEAVING ALL OF HER DOUBT TO US...

...WE KNOCK HER OFF!

AND NOW I KNOW WHY THE BODY I EMBRACE WITHIN MY EARTH-WOMB IS NOT AT PEACE. NOW I KNOW WHY IT SCRATCHES AND STINGS ME. CYNTHIA MURDERERS HAD BEEN MURDERED...



THE BODY WITHIN ME TURNS AND PUSHES AND SCRATCHES. I TRY TO STOP IT... TRY TO MAKE MY INSIDES HARD... BUT IT IS DETERMINED. THEN, ONE NIGHT... MONTHS AFTER I HAD FIRST EMBRACED IT... THE BODY PUSHES UPWARD INTO THE COOL AIR... PUSHING OUTWARD PAST MY BRISTLY SKIN...



HER MURDERERS HAD PUSHED HER DOWN A LONG FLIGHT OF CELLAR STAIRS. THAT'S TOLD THE DOCTOR...



WE HEARD HER SCREAM AND FALL! WE CAME AS FAST AS WE COULD! WHEN WE GOT HERE... SHE...

WHAT A HORRIBLE, HORRIBLE ACCIDENT! FOR...

SHE'S... SHE'S DEAD!

DESPITE MY PLEASING, IT TOTTERS OFF... ACROSS THE OTHER DIMES... INTO THE COLD WIND... THE WIND THAT CARRIES BACK TO ME ONCE AGAIN THE LAUGHTER AND SCORN OF THE OTHERS...



AND WITHIN ME THERE IS AN EMPYNESS AND A TEARFUL ONCE MORE. I AM LONELY ONCE MORE.

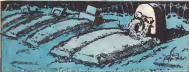
WE WERE THE SAME, CYNTHIA AND I. **HAPPEN AND PROFFLESS AND WAITING**, AND THEN THE WAITING ENDED FOR BOTH OF US. **ROLAND WAS GIVEN TO HER, AND SHE TO ME.** BUT LIKE ROLAND LEFT CYNTHIA TO THE LAUGHTER AND THE SCORN, SHE TOO HAS LEFT ME. NOW, I CAN ONLY DO AS SHE DID, TRY TO FORGET.



IT IS CYNTHIA. SHE HOLDS THEM IN HER VIC-LIKE GRIP AND STAMERS ACROSS THE OTHER GRAVES... THE OTHER GRAVES THAT HAVE SUDDENLY STOPPED LAUGHING. SHE HOLDS THEM...**ROLAND AND ERIC... HOLDS THEM OUT TO ME...**



CYNTHIA IS GONE AWAY NOW. THE SCREAMING HAS STOPPED. YES, WE **WENT** ALINE, SHE AND I. EACH WAITED...EACH GOT WHAT SHE WAITED FOR... ONLY TO LOSE IT AGAIN. BUT WHAT WE LOST WAS EVENTUALLY RETURNED TO US. **ROLAND'S AND ERIC'S TWISTED SUPPUCATED BODIES LIE DEEP WITHIN ME, PRESSED AGAINST MY EARTH-SCORN.** AND NOW IT IS **I** WHO CAN LAUGH...**LAUGH AT THE OTHERS.**



...FOR NOW I KNOW MY **REAL FULFILLMENT**. I **WASN'T LIKE** THE OTHERS **AFTER ALL**. THEY'RE ALL **SINGLE GRAVES**. I AM A **DOUBLE ONE!**

THE WIND BLOWS SILENTLY ACROSS THE CHARLED AND BENT TREES AROUND ME. IT WHISPERS PAST THE COLD STONES I LIE SILENT WITH THE EMBODIES WITHIN ME. AND I WAIT. AND THEN, ONE NIGHT, FAR AWAY... I HEAR IT. THE SCREAMING...



SOMETHING IS COMING TOWARD ME, DRAGGING THE SCREAMING BEHIND IT...

...AND I REACH FOR THEM. CYNTHIA HELPS ME REACH. SHE SHOVED ASIDE MY SHIN-CRUST, SCOOPS OUT MY INSIDES, PUSHES THEM DOWNWARD, INTO MY EMBRACE.



HEH, HEH, AND SO, KIDDER... OUR LITTLE **FEEL-FASH** ENDS ON THE **GRAVE NOTE**. **ROLAND AND ERIC WERE PUNISHED FOR THEIR CRIME. BURIED ALIVE...BY CYNTHIA'S SCORPEE**, AND OUR LITTLE **GRAVE NOTED THEM HAPPILY EVER AFTER**. SO NOW...**WHAT?** WHERE'S CYNTHIA THERE SAYS, YOU ARE? WHY SHE JUST WANDERED AROUND TILL SHE FOUND SOME **OTHER**



THE CRYPT-KEEPER'S GRIM FAIRY TALE!

BEHIND, I HAVE RECEIVED SUCH A FLOOD OF REQUESTS LATE... THE EDITOR'S MOTHER-IN-LAW... I HAVE DECIDED TO TELL YOU *ANOTHER* INFANTILE INSANITY. AFTER CAREFUL AND INTENSE RESEARCH, I HAVE DISCOVERED THE TRUE FACTS BEHIND THE GRIM FAIRY TALE ABOUT THE PRINCESS WHO SLEPT ALL THOSE YEARS. YOU KNOW... THE ONE CALLED...

THE SLEEPING BEAUTY!



ONCE UPON A TIME, LONG, LONG AGO, IN A KINGDOM FAR AWAY... EVEN FURTHER THAN BROOKLYN, MAYBE... THERE STOOD A CASTLE, COMPLETELY SURROUNDED BY A HIGH IMPENET... IMPENETRA... IMPENETRA... IT WAS A THICK GROWTH OF BRAMBLES, ALL THORNY AND WHAT-HOT... AND TO THIS CASTLE COMPLETELY SURROUNDED BY THE IMPENET... IMPENET... THE STUFF, CAME A PRINCE...

PARSON ME, MY GOOD MAN.
WHAT PLACE IS THIS?

HUNT!



I SAID, WHAT PLACE IS THIS? WHO RESIDES IN YON PALACE COMPLETELY SURROUNDED BY THAT IMPENET... IMPENET... THAT BRAMBLE FOREST?

SO WHO WANTS TO KNOW?





SO, IT IS I... THE
HERO OF THIS
WUNDERABLE FICTION...
CHARMING PRINCE
CHARMING?

PLEASED
FAMEET
YUH!
I'M
MELVIN?



MELVIN??



LIKE I SAID, MELVIN...
MELVIN?... AND
RESIDES IN YOUR
CASTLE COMPLETELY
SURROUNDED BY
THAT THORNY
OVERGROWTH?

BEYOND THAT
IMPERIAL
THAT IMPACT...
THAT... BRAMBLE
ARRESTS ALONG
THE SLEEPING
BEAUTY...
SLEEPING!



AM I THE SLEEPING
BEAUTY... FEAR DAMSEL
IN DISTRESS... AWAITING
HER RESCUE... WHEN I
WILL FOREVER
CARRY OUT!

DAN IT,
BUTTER!
THAT
BRAMBLE
BUSH IS
IMPERIAL...
IMPACT...
IT'S THICK!



FEAR NOT, MY GOOD MAN...
I, CHARMING PRINCE
CHARMING, WILL RESCUE
MY VERY THORNY
THAT GROWTH, WITH
THIS...

BOARDS!
BALDWIN!
BRIAN
AND
CRICKETS...
A SOLID GOLD
PLAYED BOY
ABOUT KNIFE!



WHEN I OBTAINED
BY TEARING OFF THE
TOP FROM A LARGE
BUSH BRANT AND
BRINGING IT ALONG
WITH MY BARE
AND ADDRESS...

THE DIRTY
BROODS...
THEY NEVER
BENT WE
BURN!



TELL ME, MY GOOD MAN...
WHAT IS THE LEGEND
OF THE SLEEPING
BEAUTY?

DID THE
SQUARE? HE WON'T
KNOW THE
LEGEND!



WHY DOES THE
SLEEPING
BEAUTY
SLEEP?

WHAT A DREAM!
EVERYBODY
KNOWS THE STORY
OF THE SLEEPING
BEAUTY!



NO?

NO HOW SHOULD
I KNOW?

ISN'T IT TRUE, MY GOOD MAN, THAT MANY YEARS AGO, A KING AND QUEEN LIVED IN THAT CASTLE?



IT FIGURED!

AND THE KING AND QUEEN WANTED A CHILD... VERY BADLY...



IT FIGURED!

AND FINALLY, THE SUDDEN PRESENTED THE KING WITH A SOUNDING BABY GIRL...



CATCH, IRONY?

HA HA HA!

NOT SO HARD JOKESTHREE!

THE KING WAS SO OVERJOYED WITH HIS NEW PRINCESS, THAT HE ISSUED AN INVITATION...



HERE IS A LIST OF EVERYBODY WHO IS ANYBODY WANTS THEM TO A FEAST... IN HONOR OF MY NEW DAUGHTER...

YES, YOUR MAJESTY!

THE NERDS OF THE KINGDOM FLOCKED TO THE FEAST...ER...PEASED TO THE FEAST...ER...THEY CAME TO EAT...



SOME SPREAD!

IT MUST BE JELLY, 'CAUSE JAR DON'T SHARE LIFE THAT...

BUT THE KING, WHO WAS A FURNISHED KING, HAD FORGOTTEN TO INVITE ONE BIG WHEEL...



AND NOW, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN... YOU WILL ALL MAKE A PREDICTION CONCERNING THE HAPPY FUTURE OF MY NEW DAUGHTER!

G'MON, ETHEL! THE PARTY'S GETTIN' HOTTIN' BULL!

THIS BIG WHEEL WAS FIT TO BE TIED, HEH, HEH... GET IT? THEY TRIED? WHEEL? TIE ON THE WHEELS ON, NEVER MIND! ANYWAY, THIS BIG WHEEL ROLLED IN AT THE HEART OF THE FEAST...



YOU WANT A PREDICTION, KING IRVING? ALL RIGHT! I'LL GIVE YOU ONE... THE PRINCESS WILL DIE ON HER EIGHTEENTH BIRTHDAY...

EVERYONE AT THE FEAST WAS SHOCKED AT THE PREDICTION OF THE BIG-SHOT WHO HADN'T INVITED...



DIE THE CLOWN-ING!

ALWAYS G'MON!

G'MON, G'MON!

BUT A THOUGHTFUL NERD CALMED THE HORRIFIED GATHERING BY PUTTING IN ACH TWO CENTS...



ON HER EIGHTEENTH BIRTHDAY, THE PRINCESS WILL NOT DIE, BUT WILL GO TO SLEEP.

WELL, G'MON ETHEL, THE PARTY IS GETTIN' HEAT BULL!



THE PRINCE STOOD UP, BODILE AND STRONG...

THAT'S BECAUSE NONE OF THEM HAD A SOLID GOLD-PLATED BOY SWORD KNIFE!



THE PRINCE TURNED TO THE BRAMBLES...

IT IS LATE! SOON IT WILL BE DARK! I MUST HURRY! 'BYE!'



THE BRAVE PRINCE STRUCK OFF INTO THE THICK GROWTH OF THORNY BRAMBLES...

SEE HOW THE LETHALLY ARMED BRANCHES FALL BEFORE THE KEEN BLADE OF MY TRUSTY SOLID GOLD-PLATED BOY SWORD KNIFE...



Hour after hour, he hacked...

WELL, WHAT DO YOU EXPECT? IT'S A **HACK** STORY!



...TIME AND TIME AGAIN, HE PASSED DIED-UP, MARCHED, MUMFIED BONES OF PRINCE CHARMING WHO HAD VAIBLY ATTEMPTED TO REACH THE SLEEPING BEAUTY...



...THE SUN WAS JUST BEGINNING TO SET WHEN CHARMING PRINCE CHARMING REACHED THE CASTLE DOOR...

ONE MORE **HACK** AND I'LL BE THROUGH...



EDITOR'S NOTE: ONE MORE **HACK** FARM LIKE THIS AND WE'LL ALL BE THROUGH.

FINALLY, THE PRINCE SWUNG OPEN THE CASTLE DOOR...

SLEEPING BEAUTY? I AM HERE!



BREATHLESSLY, HE RUSHED FROM ROOM TO ROOM...

SLEEPING BEAUTY? WHERE ARE YOU?



AND THEN...

HEY! THE SLEEPING BEAUTY... SLEEPING?



CHARMING PRINCE CHARMING
STOOD BEFORE THE SLEEPING
SLEEPING BEAUTY...



MAN! WHAT A BEAUTY!

SLOWLY HE BENT AND KISSED HER...



OUTSIDE, THE SUN HAD SET. THE
SLEEPING BEAUTY FLUTTERED HER
EYELIDS... OPENED HER EYES...



IT IS I, SLEEPING BEAUTY!
I HAVE RESCUED YOU!

THE SLEEPING BEAUTY SAT UP...



ALL THESE YEARS, YOU SNAKES!
HAVE SLEPT, UNTIL
I...

WROOF



ONLY IN THE DAY-
TIME DO I SLEEP!
CHUM!

THE SLEEPING BEAUTY LEAPED
FROM HER BED...



AT NIGHT, I'M AWAKE!
I GO OUT INTO THE WOODS...
IMPERIA... THE BEAST OUT
THERE AND FIND THE SNAKES
WHO ARE TRAPPED IN IT...

THE SLEEPING BEAUTY'S FANGS
BLISTERED...



...AND I DRINK THEIR BLOOD!
FOR YOU SEE...

... AS HE BUNG THEM INTO
CHARMING PRINCE CHARMING'S
THROAT...



I'M A VAMPIRE..
BACKER...

GOOD
LORD!

HER, NOW! WELL, THAT'S MY CHILDREN
SHILLER FOR THE WISE, CHUM.
HOPE YOU LIVED MY HAIR-RAISING
MURDER! WICKET! AND NOW,
I'LL TELL THE OLD WOMAN'S POT



BREWING. THE OLD
GAL IS READY
TO FEED YOU
FOUL FANG
AND WIND UP
MY REE-
FAR, SO I'LL
BE SHOVELING
ALONG! READY
HOLD HO-HE!
EYES...
RIGHT.

THE END

THE WITCH'S CAULDRON!

HEE, HEY! AND NOW IT'S WIND-UP TIME IN C.K.'S MAD-MAG, AND YOUR HOSTESS IN THE HAUNT OF FEAR, YOUR STEWER OF SCARY STORIES, YOUR DISH-WAIF OF DELICIOUS DESSERTS, THE OLD WITCH, IS READY WITH HER RECKING CAULDRON! SO TUCK YOUR DRINK CUPS UNDER YOUR GUMMERING CHINS AND I'LL BEGIN THE FOOL FARE & CALL...

SHADOW OF DEATH

COME WITH ME TO A LONELY CORNER IN THE DOWNTOWN BUSINESS SECTION OF A LARGE CITY. OVERHEAD, THE LAST FADING STAR IS FINALLY RETREATING BEFORE THE ADVANCING LIGHT OF DAWN, AND THE SLEEPING CITY IS AWAKENING TO THE SOUNDS OF JINGLING ALARM CLOCKS. BUT LONG BEFORE THE CITY'S OFFICE WORKERS AND BURY NEWSWYRES HAVE RISEN FROM THEIR WARM BEDS, EZRA MORTON HAS BEEN ON THE JOB. THERE HE IS NOW, UNLOCKING HIS LITTLE NEWSSTAND AND BRINGING WIDE ITS DOORS. NOTICE HOW EZRA LABORS, WINCING IN PAIN. YES, DEAR READER, EZRA IS AN INVALID... A CRIPPLED NEWSDEALER. EZRA MORTON IS PARALYZED FROM THE WAIST DOWN...



NOTICE THE BUNDLE OF MORNING NEWSPAPERS STACKED ON THE GUNGE BESIDE EZRA'S NEWSSTAND, READY TO BE UNLOADED AND LAID OUT NEATLY ON DISPLAY. SEE HOW EZRA STRUGGLES, BENDING IN HIS WHEELCHAIR AND LIFTING THE HEAVY PACKAGES...



NOW SEE THE DARK AND DESERTED SUBWAY KIOSK NEARBY, INTO WHICH, IN A FEW MINUTES, THE OFFICE-BOUNDED SECRETARIES AND THE FACTORY-BOUNDED LABORERS WILL BEGIN TO POUR, ARMED WITH THE NEWSPAPERS THEY HAVE PURCHASED FROM EZRA'S STAND...



YES, DEAR READER, EZRA SMILES. HE SMILES BECAUSE HE IS CONTENT. FOR THIS IS HIS **LIFE**... ALL THAT MATTERS TO HIM, THIS LITTLE NEWSSTAND, WITH ITS FIVE HUNDRED DAILY PAPER SALES, IS EZRA'S CASTLE. ITS MEASUR PROFIT IS THE LINE DRAWN BETWEEN INDEPENDENCE AND STARVATION FOR HIM. SO EZRA SMILES. BUT EZRA DOES NOT SMILE FOR LONG. SUDDENLY EZRA CATCHES SIGHT OF A FIGURE STANDING NEAR THE SUBWAY KIOSK...



AND NOW THE PEOPLE ARE BEGINNING TO GURRY FROM ALL DIRECTIONS TOWARD THE SUBWAY ENTRANCE. BUT THE TWO THOUSAND FOLKS WHOSE NECKS HAVE BURNED TO BURN THICK OR THIN, LESS THAT ARE NOT WITHERED AND PARALYZED AS EZRA'S ARE...



NOW, EZRA IS READY FOR THEM! FOR THE PARADE OF HUMANITY TO RUSH BY HIS STAND AND TOSSE ITS COPPER PENNIES UPON HIS PAPERWEIGHTS AND EAT AWAY AT THE STACKS UNTIL ONLY A FEW LAST BATTERED COPIES REMAIN. SEE NOW HE SMILES.



...A MAN CLUTCHING A STACK OF NEWSPAPERS UNDER HIS RUDE ARM...



YES, EZRA DOES NOT SMILE. FEAR GRIPS EZRA'S HELPLESS BODY. THAT MAN...THAT MAN WITH THE PAPERS AND THE VIOLENT CRIES OF THOSE WHO PAPER-BUYERS THEY ORDINARILY WOULD BE EZRA'S...



EDNA BEGINS TO DO WHAT HE HAS NEVER DONE BEFORE. HE BALKS OUT, TRYING TO ATTRACT ATTENTION, CALLING FOR SALES, IMPLORING, REMINDING THE MASS OF HUMANITY WITH HEALTHY LENS THAT IT HAS ALREADY BOUGHT ITS PAPERS FROM HIM...



PAPER? MORNING PAPER? GET THEM HERE...

MORNING PAPER, NA'AM? THANK YOU, NA'AM?

AND NOW, THE MORNING RUSH HOUR IS ALMOST OVER. EDNA'S PAPER STANDS STRONG AND UNBENT, TOUGHENED. THE MAN WITH THE HEALTHY LENS WAVED TO EDNA...



ALL SOLD OUT, SIMPLY? I'LL BE SEE YOU TOMORROW!

THE MAN MOVED OFF. EDNA STARED AT THE UNSOLD PAPERS PILED UP IN HIS NEIGHBORING QUARTER...



OH... I'LL... I'LL NEVER BE ABLE TO SELL THESE NOW...

BUT THE SLEEPY-EYED PEOPLE ARE BLIND. IN THEIR RUSH TO CATCH THEIR TRAINS, THEY DO NOT NOTICE THAT THEY ARE BUYING THEIR MORNING PAPERS FROM SOMEONE NEW...



PLEASE? I'VE HAD THE CORNER FOR EIGHT YEARS! THERE ARE MY CUSTOMERS! YOU'RE STEALING! PLEASE! FINE YOUR OWN CORNER!

DO WE SOMETHING, SIMPLY? I'LL BE SEE YOU TOMORROW!

ALL DAY LONG, EDNA SITS IN HIS WHEELCHAIR TRYING TO SELL HIS PAPERS TO THE FLOWING CROWD OF HIS STAND...



PAPER? GET YOUR PAPER...

FINALLY, DARKNESS BEGINS TO FALL. EARLY, EDNA TIES HIS UNSOLD PAPERS INTO BUNDLES AND DEPOSITS THEM ON THE CURB FOR THE TRUCKS TO PICK UP WHEN THEY DELIVER THE NEXT DAY'S EDITIONS...



NO... NO...

THE NEXT MORNING THE MAN IS THERE AGAIN, SHOUTING ABOUT ON HIS STRONG LEGS, SELLING HIS PAPERS TO THE UNWARY PARADE, WHILE EDNA SITS IN VAIN...



GET YOUR PAPERS HERE!

MORNING PAPER, LADY? THANK YOU...

THE DAYS PASS. EVERY MORNING THE MAN IS THERE, STEALING SALES FROM EZRA. AND EVERY NIGHT, EZRA COUNTS HIS UNOLD PAPERS AND TIES THEM INTO BUNDLES...



I'LL...I'LL NEVER HAVE ENOUGH TO LIVE ON THIS WAY!

BUT WHAT CAN EZRA DO? WHAT CAN A CRIPPLE DO TO A MAN WITH A HEALTHY STRONG BODY? THE TRUCKMAN LEAVES... EZRA SITS WITH HIS IDEAL, UNBROKEN THOUGHTS...



IF...IF I WEREN'T PARALYZED... IF I WEREN'T CRIPPLED AND HELPLESS... IF I WERE STRONG, I'D SHOW HIM! I'D...SOS...

ABOVE, THE SKY IS JUST BEGINNING TO GROW LIGHT. THE GLOW FROM A NEAREST STREETLAMP CASTS EZRA'S THOUGHTS ON HIS CLASPED AND SHAKING HANDS...



I'D...SOS... SOS...I'D...

A WEEK GOES BY. TWO, ONE MORNING, A TRUCKMAN WHO DELIVERS EZRA'S PAPERS WARMS HIM.



IF YOU CAN'T SELL MORE PAPERS THAN THIS, EZRA, WE'LL PUT YOU OUT OF OUR DELIVERY ROUTE.

I'LL...I'LL TRY. I'LL DO SOMETHING!

SUDDENLY, EZRA'S SHADOW LIFTS ITS HEAD FROM ITS HUNGE.



IT RISES FROM ITS WHEEL CHAIR, BARKING...



IT GLIDES OFF, DOWN THE DESERTED STREET, ON UNSTEADY LEGS...



IT SLIDES ACROSS BRICK WALLS...



BOARDS FENCE...



...HESITATES BEFORE A HARPONED STORE...



IT REACHES IN, FLICKING THE SHADOW OF THE AXE HANGING IN THE WINDOW...



...LIFTING AWAY THE SHADOW OF THE SHOVEL, STANDING AMONG THE GARDEN TOOLS...



...BACK ACROSS BOARD FENCES...



...BACK ACROSS BRICK WALLS...



...TO A FAMILIAR CORNER WHERE A FAMILIAR SHADOW STANDS WITH THE SHADOW OF A HUGE BUNDLE OF PAPERS UNDER ITS ARM...



EDRA'S SHADOW LIFTS THE SHADOW OF THE AXE IT
HAD STOLEN...



THE SHADOWS OF THE PAPERS SCATTER ACROSS THE
BUILDING WALL AS THE FIGURE CRUMPLES, SPURTING
A THICK-FOUNTAIN FROM ITS WOUND...



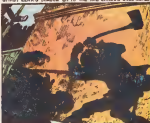
NOW EDRA'S SHADOW DRAGS THE LIFELESS SHADOW
DOWN THE ALLEY BETWEEN THE BUILDINGS...



... AND BRINGS IT DOWN UPON THE FAMILIAR SHADOW
WITH THE PAPERS UNDER ITS ARMS...



EDRA'S SHADOW PEEKS AT IT, THE CRUMPLED SHADOW
STIRS. EDRA'S SHADOW LIFTS THE AXE SHADOW ONCE MORE.



...DEPOSITING IT IN AN EMPTY LOT BESIDE A FADED BILL-
BOARD...



WITH THE SHADOW-SHOVEL, EDRA'S SHADOW DOES A
SHALLOW SHADOW-BRIBE BESIDE THE BILLBOARD...



...AND PUSHES THE LIFELESS SHADOW IN...



...AND SHOVELS THE SHADOW-SOIL IN UPON IT...

THEN, EDRA'S SHADOW RETURNS TO
THE NEWSSTAND WHERE EDRA STILL
SITS WITH HIS HEAD IN HIS HANDS...



SOB... SOB... THAT'S...
SOB... THAT'S WHAT
I'D DO!

...AND EDRA'S SHADOW ASSUMES
EDRA'S POSITION AS EDRA HEARS...



HEY! THIS
GUY'S DEAD!

WOOF!

EDRA ROLLS HIS WHEELCHAIR TO THE
CRUMPLED FORM OF THE BIG MAN WITH
THE HEALTHY LEGS LYING AMONG HIS
SCATTERED PAPERS...



WHAT
HAPPENED?

HEART ATTACK...
LOOKS LIKE!

LATER, THE MORNING-MAISON ATTENDANTS LIFT THE BODY OF THE MAN WHO
ALMOST STOLE EDRA'S BUSINESS FROM HIM. AS THEY CARRY IT TO THE WAIT-
ING TRUCK, EDRA GEEPS...



GOOD LORD!

WHICH IS THE *HEAVIEST* THING OF
THE WEEK, WOULDN'T YOU SAY? WELL,
THAT'S MY REVELING RECIPE
FOR THIS ISSUE, CREEPS. NOW IT'S
TIME TO PUT OUT THE FIRE UNDER MY
HOT AND CLOSE THE DOORS TO THE
MOUNT OF FEAR, SO
TODDLE ALONG. WE
GANGBANGERS WILL
ALL BE BACK NEXT
IN 'K.K.'S MAG, THE
VAULT OF HORROR.
'BYE, NOW. ER...
I SAID 'BYE'!
GO ON 'N
SCRAM,
ALREADY!



...FOR, ALTHOUGH THE MORNING SUN IS SHINING BRIGHTLY, THE DEAD MAN'S
BODY CASTS NO SHADOW...